

NAME: Uchida, Kuniyoshi DATE OF BIRTH: 1881 PLACE OF BIRTH: Yamanashi  
Age: 91 Sex: M Marital Status:        Education: Elementary School - Up to 8th  
Grade:       

## PRE-WAR:

Date of arrival in U.S.: 10/1904 Age: 23 M.S. S Port of entry: San Fran.  
\*Occupation/s: 1. Peach pruning/Wood Chopping 2. Railroad Worker 3. Domestic Worker  
Place of residence: 1. Oakdale, Ca. 2. Pasadena, Ca. 3.         
Religious affiliation: Christian Church  
Community organizations/activities: Gardeners' Association

## EVACUATION:

\* 4. Gardener 5. Nursery Business

Name of assembly center: Tulare Assembly Center

Name of relocation center: Gila River Camp, Arizona

Dispensation of property: Sold/Home - Leased Names of bank/s:       

Jobs held in camp: 1. Farmer 2.       

Jobs held outside of camp:       

Left camp to go to: Pasadena, California

## POST-WAR:

Date returned to West Coast: February 10, 1945

Address/es: 1. Pasadena, California 2.       

3.       

Religious affiliation: Christian Church

Activities: 1.        2.        3.       

If deceased, date, place and age at time of death:       

Name of interviewer: Bob Uchida (Son) Date: 6/21/73 Place: Los Angeles, Ca.  
*Translator: Haru M. Kaida*



Interviewed by Mr. Bob Uchida (son)

Translated by Mrs. Haru Nikaido

IN JAPAN

Bob Uchida: As will become apparent in this interview my command of the Japanese language is very poor. Therefore, some of the questions I will ask in Japanese; other questions will be asked in Japanese or in English and at times I will mix both Japanese and English in my questions so please bear with me.

Where were you born?

K. Uchida: Yamanashi-ken, Mishiyama-mura.

Bob Uchida: When were you born?

K. Uchida: 1881.

Bob Uchida: Do you remember anything about the wars? Sino Japanese war? Russo Japanese war? World War I? Manchurian event?

K. Uchida: Mn. I remember a little.

Bob Uchida: Do you remember World War I?

K. Uchida: Uh, huh. I remember a little.

Bob Uchida: Do you remember any events like tsunami, earthquakes, plagues?

K. Uchida: Uh, huh. I remember all those events.

Bob Uchida: Religion of family?

K. Uchida: Tenrikyo.

Bob Uchida: Did you hear anything about Christianity in Japan?

K. Uchida: Yes, I heard about it.

Bob Uchida: What was your feeling about it?

K. Uchida: I couldn't understand it very well.

Bob Uchida: Is that so. How was the ~~condition~~ of your family when you left Japan. Were they rich or poor.

K. Uchida: They were poor.

Bob Uchida: How much formal education did you have?

K. Uchida: Elementary school - that is, up to the eighth grade.



Bob Uchida: What was the reason you came over the USA?

K. Uchida: That is, to make money.

Bob Uchida: Was it only to make money?

K. Uchida: Yes, and because I wanted to see America.

Bob Uchida: When did you leave Japan?

K. Uchida: 1904, from Yokohama.

Bob Uchida: Did you go thru Hawaii?

K. Uchida: Yes, I did.

Bob Uchida: How was Hawaii?

K. Uchida: They did agricultural work there.

Bob Uchida: How was the condition in Hawaii?

K. Uchida: They were very poor.

#### ON THE SHIP

Bob Uchida: What kind of people were on the ship?

K. Uchida: I was the only Japanese on board. The others were of various nationalities like Filipinos, Caucasian, and Chinese.

Bob Uchida: What kind of a ship was it?

K. Uchida: Very poor. It was a small ship.

Bob Uchida: Do you remember anything that happened on the ship.

K. Uchida: Yes, I was tossed. I mean I was seasick.

Bob Uchida: What was your expectations of America?

K. Uchida: I thought it was a good country.

#### FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF AMERICA

Bob Uchida: This is your thoughts of America as you first landed here. What was your first impressions of America?

K. Uchida: It is a beautiful country.

Bob Uchida: How did the immigration officers treat you?

K. Uchida: Yes, I do have recollections. I thought they were good.



Bob Uchida: Did they make a fool of you?  
K. Uchida: No, they didn't make a fool of me.  
Bob Uchida: What did you do when you landed in America for the first time?  
K. Uchida: My first job was peach pruning and chopping wood.  
Bob Uchida: Where did you do that?  
K. Uchida: Oakdale. It's in northern California.  
Bob Uchida: Where did the boat land?  
K. Uchida: The boat landed in San Francisco.  
Bob Uchida: San Francisco. Oh, I see. Did you look for a job right away.  
K. Uchida: Yes, I worked 10 hours in one day for \$1.25 a day.  
Bob Uchida: Ah, g ee. How did the white people treat you.  
K. Uchida: They treated me good.  
Bob Uchida: Really? They didn't make a fool of you or do anything bad to you.  
K. Uchida: No, nothing. I was out in the country.  
Bob Uchida: Do you have any memories concerning various situations like happy experiences, sad experiences, funny ones, bad ones, etc?  
K. Uchida: Yes, I remember. I had happy experiences and there were times of suffering.  
Bob Uchida: Can you remember when you suffered?  
K. Uchida: ...hm, so nah, could it be when I was a child?  
Bob Uchida: No, in the beginning - before you were married.  
K. Uchida: Oh, I see, before I was married uh? When I used to get my wages my happy experiences were to go sightseeing.

#### SETTLEMENT

Bob Uchida: How did you find your bride?  
K. Uchida: I returned back to Japan to get my bride. That was, let me see....  
I wonder whether it was 1913..?  
Bob Uchida: Was it picture bride?  
K. Uchida: No, no, no, no. It wasn't picture bride.



Bob Uchida: How did you do it? Papa, did you know her?

K. Uchida: Ah, yes, she lived close to our house in Japan.

Bob Uchida: Why don't you tell them about Mitsumori's. They're your relatives aren't they?

K. Uchida: He wasn't my relative.

Bob Uchida: No, no, about your wife being Mr. Mitsumori's sister. Your wife was Mr. Mitsumori's sister wasn't she? Wasn't it with Mr. Mitsumori that you both came to US. You were good friends weren't you?

K. Uchida: Oh, yes, we were good friends. Both of us came to US together.

Bob Uchida: What kind of wedding ceremony did you have?

K. Uchida: We were very poor and we had the wedding ceremony at home.

Bob Uchida: What kind? Shinto?

K. Uchida: It wasn't Shinto or Bukkyo. You know in those days we had "baishak-kunin". My big sister's husband was the "baishakkunin".

Bob Uchida: I see. Have you every been homesick?

K. Uchida: Yes.

Bob Uchida: Where?

K. Uchida: In America. I wanted to return to Japan during the first few years.

Bob Uchida: What kind of hardship did you have?

K. Uchida: When I worked for the railroads and also for the street cars.

Bob Uchida: Was the work hard?

K. Uchida: Yes, the work was hard because I wasn't used to it.

Bob Uchida: Have you ever been discriminated?

K. Uchida: Bad words were said to me. That's about all. Sometimes they called me "Jap".

Bob Uchida: How did you learn English?

K. Uchida: I learned it at Sunday School.

Bob Uchida: Which Sunday School did you attend?

K. Uchida: Church Sunday School in Pasadena; on Mary street. It was the Congregational Church.



Bob Uchida: How much income did you have?

K. Uchida: Let me see. Was it 19...?

Bob Uchida: Yes, this is after you moved to Pasadena.

K. Uchida: It was \$1.25

Bob Uchida: In one day?

K. Uchida: Yes, in one day.

Bob Uchida: When did you buy a house?

K. Uchida: Let me see, -that's very hard. I wonder when I purchased that house.

That house on Kensington. It was right after Setsuko was born.

Do I have to say anything about the arrival of my wife?

Bob Uchida: No.

K. Uchida: 19.... 19..... Setsuko was born in 1917 and Michiko was born in 1916. It was 1917 that we bought the house.

Bob Uchida: How and in whose name did you buy it? Did you buy it in your name?

K. Uchida: No.

Bob Uchida: Did you purchase it in Mr. Mitsumori's name?

K. Uchida: Just a minute. At that time.... at that time

Bob Uchida: Was it a real estate agency?

K. Uchida: No, let me see. I had an advisor, a Miss Hamilton.

Bob Uchida: So, it was in her name? How much was it?

K. Uchida: \$5000.

Bob Uchida: I see. Did you have any difficulties?

K. Uchida: No, I did not have any particular difficulties.

Bob Uchida: Did Japanese organizations like JACL, kenjinkai, churches, consulate help you in any way?

K. Uchida: No, no. No help.

Bob Uchida: What kind of entertainment, hobbies and other things did you enjoy.

K. Uchida: I had no special hobbies.

Bob Uchida: On Sunday what did you do after church?

K. Uchida: After church I used to go to the park with friends, have picnics and read books.



Bob Uchida: Did you go to the beaches too?

K. Uchida: Yes, I went to the beaches.

Bob Uchida: What do you remember about rearing children?

K. Uchida: I worked from early morning to late in the evening. My greatest joy was in seeing my children grow.

Bob Uchida: Do you remember anything about segregated school?

K. Uchida: I didn't necessarily have any experiences.

Bob Uchida: Did you send your children back to Japan and why?

K. Uchida: No. I had no money.

Bob Uchida: What kind of contributions did you make during World War II?

K. Uchida: Only the Gardners' Association.

Bob Uchida: When did you come in contact with Christianity?

K. Uchida: 1900? It was when I went to church - let me see. Yes, it was 1908 in Pasadena. I wanted to learn more about Christianity.

Bob Uchida: Did they help you otherwise? Did they help you get jobs?

Mr. Mitsumori said something about finding jobs.

K. Uchida: Oh, yes, they had an employment agency. Yes, I did daywork.

Bob Uchida: What kind of daywork?

K. Uchida: Housework. Window washing. Everything.

Bob Uchida: How many years?

K. Uchida: 5 years.

Bob Uchida: This church you went to - did they do anything for mothers - like cooking.

K. Uchida: Yes, they did.

Bob Uchida: What was it?

K. Uchida: They taught sewing and English to the women.

Bob Uchida: Did you live at the church dormitory for a couple of years?

K. Uchida: Not for a couple of years; I lived there one year.

#### DEPRESSION PERIOD

Bob Uchida: What kind of hardships did you experience?

K. Uchida: I didn't have a job.



Bob Uchida: What kind of work did you do?  
 K. Uchida: I did gardening. There weren't too many jobs.  
 Bob Uchida: When did you decide to stay here permanently?  
 K. Uchida: 19... 19... 1913. I wanted to live my whole life here.  
 Bob Uchida: Is that after you returned from a visit to Japan?  
 K. Uchida: Yes it was.

#### WORLD WAR II

Bob Uchida: What kind of attitude did whites have towards Japanese?  
 K. Uchida: It wasn't a very good feeling.  
 Bob Uchida: Did they call you "Jap"?  
 K. Uchida: Office people didn't call me that but regular people called me "Jap".  
 Bob Uchida: When Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, what did you think first of all?  
 K. Uchida: I was surprised.  
 Bob Uchida: Were you mad?  
 K. Uchida: No, I thought it was very bad.  
 Bob Uchida: How did you come to know about it.  
 K. Uchida: Thru the newspaper.  
 Bob Uchida: What were you doing at that time?  
 K. Uchida: I was working in my nursery which I had started in 1940.  
 Bob Uchida: When you got to know about evacuation how did you feel about the coming event?  
 K. Uchida: Not a good feeling. It had me worried.  
 Bob Uchida: How did you go to the Assembly Center?  
 K. Uchida: I rented my house. I packed all night. I did a lot of hard work.  
 Bob Uchida: Did you go by train?  
 K. Uchida: Yes, I went by train to Tulare.  
 Bob Uchida: How did your white friends feel about this?  
 K. Uchida: I had all kinds of friends. Some were very kind and sympathetic; others thought it was normal procedure.



Bob Uchida: How did you take care of your house, possessions and business?

K. Uchida: I sold out what comprised the business. I rented the house.

Bob Uchida: How many days did that take? How much time?

K. Uchida: Oh, it took a long time.

Bob Uchida: How much of a financial loss did you suffer?

K. Uchida: I had a nursery so. . it was a great loss.

Bob Uchida: How old were your children when you evacuated?

K. Uchida: Bob was 9 years old, Makoto was 22 years old, Kats was 17 years old, Joe was 15 years old and Setsuko was 23 years old.

Bob Uchida: How did the white churches react to this evacuation?

K. Uchida: Didn't you ask that question before? Some people thought this evacuation was a normal procedure.

Bob Uchida: This is about the church people.

K. Uchida: The church people felt very sorry over this.

#### ASSEMBLY CENTER

Bob Uchida: Which Assembly Center and Relocation Camp did you go?

K. Uchida: We were 6 months at Tulare Assembly Center and then we went to... let me see, it's on the tip of my tongue - oh, yes, Gila River Relocation Camp.

Bob Uchida: What was the condition of the Centers?

K. Uchida: It was good. I received some money (he meant the wages in camp. Those that worked received \$16.00 or \$19.00 a month.)

Bob Uchida: What do you remember?

K. Uchida: I remember working as a farmer.

Bob Uchida: What kind of events took place there?

K. Uchida: Nothing important.

Bob Uchida: What did you think about the problem of loyalty?

K. Uchida: Some Japanese had bad feelings toward the USA.



Bob Uchida: How about you?

K. Uchida: I didn't have any antagonism. I always felt sorry we had a war.

Bob Uchida: How did you feel as a Japanese, when you were put in the Concentration Camp?

K. Uchida: I didn't have a happy feeling. I felt it couldn't be helped (shikataganai).

Bob Uchida: How did you think about Nisei volunteering for the Army?

K. Uchida: I thought it was very good.

Bob Uchida: What kind of entertainments, hobbies, and enjoyments did you have in Camp?

K. Uchida: I didn't have anything special. I liked to go to church. I had no hobbies.

Bob Uchida: What kind of a job did you have in Camp?

K. Uchida: Growing vegetables.

Bob Uchida: How was your religious life there? Did you go to church?

K. Uchida: I went to church every Sunday and every Wednesday night I attended the prayer meetings.

Bob Uchida: What did you think about the problem of education of children in the Camp?

K. Uchida: We had a problem there. Some children went out of Camp to attend school. There was a school there to educate those children in Camp.

Bob Uchida: What kind of meaningful things do you remember in the Camp?

K. Uchida: I don't have an answer for that right now.

Bob Uchida: Did your faith change during the camp period?

K. Uchida: No, it did not change.

#### RESETTLEMENT

Bob Uchida: When did you leave camp?

K. Uchida: February 10, 1945



Bob Uchida: Why did you leave there?

K. Uchida: I wanted to go back to my familiar Pasadena - that's why I went out.

Bob Uchida: Why did you come back to Pasadena?

K. Uchida: Because that was my home.

Bob Uchida: What kind of a job did you have?

K. Uchida: Gardening. I was a gardener.

Bob Uchida: Do you remember anything about the time in the Hostel?

K. Uchida: Yes, I remember. There was a hostel at the church. Let me see, how long did I stay there.

Bob Uchida: Which church was that?

K. Uchida: That was the Congregational Church.

Bob Uchida: Who had the hostel?

K. Uchida: Miss Fanning.

Bob Uchida: Which church did she represent?

K. Uchida: She was from the Congregational Church.

Bob Uchida: Did the white churches take care of you?

K. Uchida: Yes, they did. Miss Fanning did a lot for the Japanese.

Bob Uchida: How did the Japanese churches reconstruct themselves?

K. Uchida: There were quite a few Japanese that returned to Pasadena.

In the beginning Rev. Kokubun was our minister and we were helped in various ways.

Bob Uchida: Did the white churches give you any money?

K. Uchida: No, they didn't give us any money.

Bob Uchida: How was the attitude of the whites towards you after the war?

K. Uchida: It was all right. Not bad.

Bob Uchida: How was the process of education of your children?

K. Uchida: I wanted to educate my children as much as possible.

Bob Uchida: How did you find a house?

K. Uchida: It was my own home.

Bob Uchida: It was our home and what we had to do was to evict the people that were living there.



Bob Uchida: What was the most difficult experience you had during this time?

K. Uchida: Sometimes they called me "Jap". I realized that it must have been someone who had lost a relative in the war.

Bob Uchida: Regarding your work who helped you find a job?

K. Uchida: Not necessarily anybody. I didn't have a friend to work with, so I found my own jobs.

#### APPENDIX

Bob Uchida: As a Christian what is your hope for the future?

K. Uchida: I want to go to church and keep up my religion. I pray that my children will continue to attend church.

Bob Uchida: So ends my interview with my father. I apologize for the brevity of this interview. Mainly because in many instances my father did not understand my questions due to my poor Japanese. Also, I did not ask him other leading questions that should have developed from these original questions. I didn't ask him to elaborate because I knew many of the answers to these questions from previous interviews. Actually, I had interviewed him on five or six occasions for term papers I wrote in college and also for an Asian Studies course that I was helping to develop here in the Pasadena City Schools.

I would like to elaborate on some of the earlier questions of this interview. Perhaps, to give a somewhat more detailed picture of his life. I might mention also that the lives of my father and Mr. Mitsumori, who is his brother-in-law are quite similar in that they both came to America together and stayed in Pasadena together. When they got married they lived perhaps, within a mile of each other almost their entire lives. Their lives were pretty much together socially and in the church.



Bob Uchida:  
(cont.)

My father was born in 1881 which then makes him 91 years of age today and which makes it another reason for the shortness of his answers and perhaps, a misunderstanding of some of my questions. But he was the second son of a family of four children from Yamanashi-ken. One reason he came to America was for economic gains and like many others he believed in the "golden story". The story of rich opportunities in America as related by a friend who returned to the little village where he lived.

Actually, being the second son, he wouldn't be able to inherit the land of the family so therefore, he left Japan in April, 1904 together with his neighbor, Mr. Nitsuke Mitsumori and Fusataro Tanzawa, who was also a member of the Pasadena church for many, many years. He arrived in Hawaii the next month of May and worked on a sugar plantation as did many other fellow Asians before and after him. And there he worked for four months when he left for the mainland reaching San Francisco, in late October, 1904. And as he mentioned, he became a migrant worker; first going to the San Jose area where he worked in the fruit orchards and doing odd jobs such as chopping wood. He worked from 12 to 16 hours a day and received wages of \$1.00 to \$1.25 a day.

In early 1905, he continued his early migratory travels going to Fresno where he spent many back-breaking hours picking grapes. After several months he returned to San Francisco where he re-joined Mr. Mitsumori who had gone on to do other things. Then he left by ship to go to the Los Angeles area where he heard that there were more opportunities and fewer instances of prejudice. In the Los Angeles area he worked on the railroads and the streetcar lines both in construction and maintenance.



Bob Uchida:  
(cont.)

But he soon tired of this itinerary life of sleeping in tents and doing work that held no hope of a promotion. So, he and Mr. Mitsumori took on a more permanent kind of a job - that of a handyman on a ranch of a Mr. Johnson in Pasadena. And here he worked from 1906 to 1909 and from that time on my father worked as a gardener and window cleaner.

He mentioned that he returned to Japan to marry my mother in 1913, but according to my records it was in 1911 and then he returned to America with her in 1912 to stay. They raised six children; the oldest of whom died in 1923 from typhoid fever. He did gradening all the way to 1940 when he was able to buy some land in his oldest daughter name, Setsuko, who was 21 years old then.

When he was asked about prejudices, my father said he didn't encounter too many instances. One reason might be that he was not employed in any kind of occupation which offered competition to white Americans. All of these jobs that he held - gardener, handyman, and etc. were jobs that caucasians disliked and avoided. Secondly, he minimized any possible situation of prejudice by his style of life. For example, he rarely went out to dinner with his family. Mainly, because they couldn't afford it. Even if they did go out, they went to a Japanese or Chinese restaurant. Also, they did most of their trading at stores owned by fellow Japanese. And, of course, the life of his family was centered in the small community of Pasadena and the Japanese Christian Church. And, of course, the main recreation was going on picnics and beach parties.

He seemed to minimize his sufferings also. But I can assure that in previous conversations with him, he mentioned about his sufferings



Bob Uchida:  
(cont.)

of working long hours to barely eke out a living. At the same time, trying to save enough money from his gardening work to finally buy some land. Most of the money he had to borrow but with this land he started a flower nursery in 1940. And just as he was beginning to build up the business, of course, the war came - and then evacuation. I'm going to quit here because I do not want to go to the other side of this cassette and waste almost 45 minutes.